438 643 [648] the gold. But they, in turn, could in no case resell the gold to anybody other than the Fama. Aside from certain sacrificial uses and the making of jewels for the Fama's wives, gold served to ransom captives or to negotiate royal alliances.

435 The price of the commodities was set by agreement between buyer and seller, except for cloth which had a fixed price, 100 cowrie shells per cubit in the Bamako region. As a matter of fact, the cotton [286] gathered in the fields of the community was woven by captives who were not paid.

426 686 Loans were made without interest. Interest, korko, is still forbidden today. Loans are guaranteed by labor. The debtor who could not repay his debt on time and whose family head refused to pay it for him was seized by the Fama and held as security until such time as he had reimbursed his debt.

804 Side by side with French units of measurement, the natives use their own for trade. Their measures of length: the cubit (elbow to tip of middle finger), the span, the foot, the length of both arms extended, the pace, the diare, and the kala . . . ; their measures of capacity: the sawel or mouré, the mud; their weights: the moutkhal, the catal, the large and little karoni, the wakie, the pellet of tali, of tomi, of bagana, of gelen. Cotton is weighed on rough scales whose pointer is a wooden rod and the balances large gourds hung by strings. For weights, large rocks, kulu, from 800 to 1,200 grams are [436] used. Finally, the Bambara use French money almost exclusively: one franc of metropolitan France is equivalent to 0.50 francs C.F.A. Nevertheless, the use of cowrie shells is still frequent.

d. Banks

453 One bank of issue exists in French West Africa: the Bank of French West Africa. There are also private banks, the number of which has increased during the past few years.

The Bank of French West Africa, which has a branch at Bamako, carries out the following operations: [43]

1. discounts notes or bills of two or several signatures due in not more than 180 days;

2. creates, negotiates, or buys drafts;

453 3. discounts negotiable obligations or non-negotiable obligations guaranteed by warrants or receipts for merchandise, by assignment of pending harvests, by bills of lading, by pledges of securities, by deposits of gold and silver ingots, and monies in bullion.

4. participates in loans to the State or Colonies with the provision that, except for special authorization, this participation does not total more than half the reserves.

5. participates in the creation of financial, commercial, and agricultural enterprises in the interest of the country, providing this participation does not amount to more than a quarter of its reserves.

The private banks are:

The National Bank for Commerce and Industry with a branch at Bamako and another at Kayes.

The African Commercial Bank with a branch at Bamako.

These are deposit banks, but the second is also an investment bank.

[44]

CHAPTER 5

HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN

I. Prehistory

173 The Bambara have fairly precise notions about their prehistory and their protohistory, and about the history of their ancestors and the evolution of their techniques. Their tradition has them as coming from Mandé, a country whose location remains uncertain for several authors (1), and which even leads Monteil (2) to say: "... in fact

1. J. Vidal, Au sujet de l'emplacement du Mali ou Melli; le véritable emplacement du Mali [Concerning the Location of the Mali or Melli; The True Location of the Mali].

2. Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta].